Eurodiaconia input to Commission consultation on a Council Recommendation on Long-term care

29 March 2022

Eurodiaconia is a network of 55 organisations founded in the Christian faith, operating in 32 European Countries, providing care and social services and advocating for social justice. Based on their long-standing experience in the provision of long-term care services, we call on the European Commission to propose a strong Council Recommendation, which asks Member States to create coherent policy frameworks to ensure the provision of quality, affordable, available and accessible care services.

Our Network would like to highlight the following considerations, which we urge the European Commission to include in the upcoming Council Recommendation on long-term care:

1. **Ensure Accessibility and affordability of adequate quality long-term care services for everyone living in the European Union :** Member States should develop the long-term care offer in order to be able to offer accessible, adequate and affordable long-term care to everyone needing such care and living on their territory. This should be done in close cooperation with care service providers, in particular the not-for-profit sector. The not-for-profit sector should be consulted to help identify the needs in the population, with particular attention to vulnerable groups.

2. **Commit to the exploration of a Care Guarantee,** modelled but not identical to the Child and Youth Guarantees' where access to quality, affordable and accessible care is promoted through a clear package of legislative, political and financial commitments.

3. **Addressing the care needs through rights-based and person-centred approaches:** A rights-based and person-centred approach to long-term care should start with the needs of the person receiving care. Member States together with regional and local authorities and not-for-profit social service providers should do regular mapping of the existing care needs and develop strategies to best respond. These should be reviewed and adapted regularly to evolving needs.

4. **Integration of care services:** To provide best possible social care services, the care provision needs to be holistic, person centred and integrated with all relevant public and health services. This is not only beneficial for the person receiving care, but also more cost-effective as needs can be identified and addressed early and doubling can be avoided.

5. **Support informal carers:** Informal carers are still covering the majority of all care work. Modern long-term care approaches should include informal carers and their needs, by offering support and complementing the care delivered by the informal carer with professional care as needed and in close cooperation with the care giver and care receiver.

6. **Addressing staff shortages in the care sector:** Increased efforts are needed to make the work in the care sector more attractive. This includes better wages and better carer to care receiver ratios, but also opportunities for life-long learning and attractive career paths. The threshold for accessing training for care jobs should also be reduced. This could be done for example through financial support to social care students.

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7. **Review and update the Voluntary Quality Principles for Social Services** and develop clear quality principles for the Long-Term Care Sector.

8. **Promoting social innovation:** Member States should ensure that they have frameworks in place, which promote social innovation in the care sector. This needs to go hand in hand with funding opportunities for testing social innovation, but also implementing successful innovations in the long-term.

9. **Promote investment in Long Term Care services** through the economic governance tools available to the EU and Member States such as emphasising green and digital transitions in the Recovery and Resilience Facility, exploring ways in which investments in Long Term Care can exempt from processes under the Stability and Growth pact or future economic governance processes.

10. **Collect standardized data:** The European Commission should advise Member States to regularly collect standardized data in the care sector, to be able to adequately address care needs and those of social services providers.

11. **Monitor quality:** The Council Recommendation should encourage Member States to monitor the quality-of-care services delivered, by using a proposed set of quality indicators focussing on the impact care services have on the quality of life of the service beneficiaries which should be aligned with the Social Scoreboard and integrated into the relevant reporting..

12. **Member States should provide sufficient and stable funding that takes into all the costs of providing quality, accessible and affordable long term care services:** Stable funding is essential, especially for not-for-profit care providers. Only with the assurance of stable funding can they guarantee high quality long-term care to those in need. Alternative funding methods such as authorization and licensing procedures, reserved markets and user-led funding models should be further developed and used by Member States to best meet the funding demands of the care sector. Financing should also allow for positive staff rewards schemes such as progressive salary systems, training opportunities and professional development.
Furthermore, opportunities for additional financial support for non-for-profit social services providers should be created for emergency situations, as these providers have no reserves to draw on to respond to sudden increases of costs due to external factors (for example during the COVID-19 crisis, but also increasing energy prices in the context of the war in Ukraine).

13. **National Care Strategies:** The Council Recommendation should encourage Member States to develop National Care Strategies on Long-term care, taking into consideration the above-mentioned aspects. These should include reporting requirements and regular review mechanisms on the attainment of set objectives, with the full involvement of stakeholders and civil society organisations.